

THE MINUTES OF THE WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING March 27, 2002

Chairman Brusch called the meeting to order at 7:33 PM.

Members absent were: J. Hilgenberg and P. Schafer

Also present: Selectman Anne Marie Mahoney and Selectman William Brownsberger

Memo Regarding Structural Changes (from March 6th meeting)

1. Move the election to long before or long after the budget is due to Town Meeting.
 - Committee members discussed moving the election until a date in May or June. Selectman Monahan mentioned the problem is not with the time of the election, it is getting everyone in the Town to agree on the budget. The budget has become too political between the Towns versus the Schools. He recommends everyone work together to develop a budget.
 - Member Miller agrees there is merit in changing the time of the election. She recommended having the election at the same time, but not changing offices until a time later, similar to the Presidential election.
 - Member Flewelling would prefer to keep things traditional and informing the Committee when a new Selectman is elected, the two Selectmen staying on help the new member (Selectman) in getting up to speed with putting together the budget.
 - Selectman Mahoney deemed the timetable goes back to a long time ago, and as a candidate, she made it her business to be up to date with what was going on with the Town, since the budget process is started almost 6 months prior to Town Meeting.
 - Member White believes this suggestion reveals a logical process, and elected officials should go through a whole process instead of joining in mid-stream.
 - Member Hofmann questioned when those elections would be moved to, in which Member White suggested moving the election as close to the beginning of the budget process as possible. Member Freiner informed the Committee that other towns hold elections in November at the same time as the state/national elections. This would also save costs of an additional election day. However, the down side is that in a big state/national election, the Town's issues may not get too publicized.
 - Mr. Kleckner informed the Committee that there may a restriction in the election statutes that says Town Meeting must be within a certain time of an election. Member Heigham will look further into this issue.
2. Eliminating the graveyard shift police union contract staffing requirement
 - Chairman Brusch told the Committee this is also a contractual issue as well as a structural issue. Boston and Cambridge have issued this out of their contracts.
 - Member Widmer asked Selectman Monahan if the Town ever attempted to negotiate this part of the contract, and Selectman Monahan replied no.
 - Member Curtis urged the Committee to look at what makes sense for the Town.

- Member White recalled statistics of incidents that need uniformed staff during the graveyard shift are half of what is required during the 4 to midnight shifts.
- Chairman Brush suggested to Selectman Monahan the Board of Selectmen look further into this issue before the next collective bargaining.
- 3. Pay as you throw
 - Selectman Monahan notified the Committee of the Board of Selectmen's last meeting. He suggested it is probably not feasible for the FY2003 budget, but it will continue to be pursued. The Solid Waste Committee along with a few people are working on exploring this issue further.
- 4. Re-evaluate solid waste
 - Mr. Kleckner said the same group as above would look further into this in the next year. Chairman Brusch would be interested in reviewing this topic further in a year or two.
- 5. Close Town offices except for Public Safety for 2 weeks in July
 - Member Hobbs asked the Committee if the Town's wages are competitive with other Towns. Chairman Brusch dismissed the idea after further consideration.
- 6. Streamline COA personnel
 - Chairman Brusch recommended this idea, but she does not think this is an action that can occur at this time. It does appear there are some duplicate duties being done with the COA, but it will be reviewed at a later time.
- 7. Implementation of a two-tiered tax system
 - Selectman Monahan recommended the Assessors look further into this issue. He also stated the Selectmen revisit this issue yearly with the Assessors. Chairman Brusch will discuss with Assessing Administrator Bob Reardon this topic after Town Meeting and see if he will address this issue with the Committee. Member Widmer said he has additional information, which he will present at that time.
- 8. Review all overtime
 - Chairman Brush assumes that each Department Head reviews this every year and evaluates the reasons why their employees are working so much overtime.
 - Member Hobbs addressed this issue by suggesting Department Heads defend their line item during the budget process request time. Mr. Kleckner defended this idea by explaining to the Committee a review is done yearly during the budget request process. Chairman Brusch asked Mr. Kleckner to discuss this overtime topic at his next Department Heads meeting.
 - Member Freiner cited the Cemetery Department as an example of burials and work being done on Saturdays, and that maybe changing workweeks to Tuesday-Saturday instead.
- 9. Train volunteers to do car seat program and maybe other services currently done by Town Employees.
 - The Police Chief agreed this would be an idea to look into (the liability issue for the Town needs to be reviewed further). Chairman Brusch said the Police Auxiliary declined volunteering on this program.
 - Member Hofmann questioned if this program should be done by the Police Department. Just because it is a popular program, it doesn't mean that it should be done (too big a liability issue).

- Member Freiner recommended the Town get a sponsor for the child safety program.
- 10. Have non-firefighters be our EMT's
- Chairman Brusch dismissed this idea after discussion with outside sources.
- 11. Change Town-owned vehicle rules.
- Chairman Brusch mentioned this issue needs to be looked into further. Chairman Brusch, Member Hofmann and Member Oates offered to work on this topic this summer.
- 12. Decrease some or all 40-hour staff to 35.
- Chairman Brusch thinks the 4 PM - 5 PM hour may be more productive than 7:30 AM to 8 AM and 4 PM - 4:30 PM time. If it is only a half hour at either end, it may not be more productive than a full hour at the end of the day. Note: One department's hours were reverted back to 35 for FY2003.

Other Issues

Chairman Brusch informed the Committee that Human Resource Director Cindy Gallagher is preparing a list of Town employees who are more than 20 hours and which insurance they are on. Also, the Committee was informed the "20 hour rule" is statutory. If an employee works 20 hours or more per week, they are eligible for health insurance.

Creating Saturday hours for some departments is done through collective bargaining, and in several contracts, there is already a provision for Saturday hours. One example is in the Town Clerk's Office. Ms. Gallagher mentioned to Chairman Brusch that opening Saturdays will probably generate a grievance. Ms. Gallagher will look further into this topic. Chairman Brusch suggested that absentee voting be done on Saturdays or one evening instead of Monday-Friday 8 AM - 4 PM.

State Representative Anne Paulsen will be meeting with the Committee next week at 7:30 to talk about things the state legislature is doing to help the Town in this budget crisis.

Chairman Brusch informed the Committee that Subcommittee reports due on April 10th. She also informed the Committee the League of Women Voters Night is April 18th.

Discussion of FY2003 Budget and Town Meeting Warrants

Mr. Kleckner informed the Committee of a new article, Article 14, creating a permanent Senior Center although it does not identify funds, a place or a timeframe.

Chairman Brusch reviewed the "Potential Warrant Articles for the 2002 Town Meeting" spreadsheet to determine which potential articles the Committee will vote on. A copy of this spreadsheet is on file with the Clerk (originally distributed at the March 13th meeting).

Article pertaining to the reduction in the Historic District

- Discussion ensued about a final report by the Historic District Commission is due to the Planning Board. The Board of Selectmen will ask the HDC for this final report.

Mr. Kleckner talked briefly about the articles in the Special Town Meeting Warrant. · Article 2's funding is in the Town budget already. Member McCormick will bring information pertaining to the Library collective bargaining issue for next week's meeting. · Article 3 is a general article moving money into the reserve fund and allowing the

Warrant Committee to allocate it. Mr. Kleckner cited health insurance as a possible allocation need.

Selectman Monahan reviewed with the Committee the Board of Selectmen's Monday meeting. He recommended putting of budget discussion to May so that hopefully there will be more information than now available. In order to get the O'Neill Developers and Town together, May 20th would be a reasonable date for the Special Town Meeting. The Board of Selectmen also discussed Member Clark's March 15th memo. A copy of this memo is on file with the Clerk. It is recommended in this memo to place the suggested resolutions on an additional Town Warrant, as well as the option for an operating budget override. Selectman Mahoney suggested: producing the three budgets (level, reduced, and an everything), send that out with the Warrant material to Town Meeting Members, have the members check off what they want/don't want, and ask Town Meeting Members: "Are you willing to fund an override or borrow for what you want. Or what are you willing to give up?" She mentioned a suggestion she received offering a possible 2% override every year for 5 or 6 years to get us back to where the Town was pre-Proposition 2½. Selectman Brownsberger would borrow enough to keep the Town/School priorities with reductions in other areas. He characterized the #2 suggestion as a "bedrock budget."

Member Clark discussed his memo briefly. He wanted to provide a channel to get a discussion started with both the Warrant Committee and then Town Meeting. The Committee further discussed the memo and budget timing if an override is needed. Member White said he would like to inform Town Meeting of where the Town will be next year as well as this year. Chairman Brusch is trying to focus on the whole timeframe. If an override is going to be held hopefully by June 1st, this memo discussion will need to take place on the first night of Town Meeting. The Board of Selectmen are going to have to determine what budget items are included in #2. Member Curtis suggested a revised #2 "That the Selectmen be requested to present a budget to be funded by not more than \$1.5 million in borrowing to be followed by an override in Spring 2003."

Member White suggested the Committee inform Town Meeting that next year's budget should include some structural changes which should improve the budget situation. Examples cited were health insurance changes, and consolidations. The Warrant Committee pointed out these restructuring ideas had not been assured and the Committee should be careful not to inadvertently misrepresent what the Committee may not be able to accomplish. The Board of Selectmen will finalize the structure of Member Clark's memo at their next meeting.

Acceptance of Minutes

1. Member Heigham made a motion, Member Hofmann seconded said motion, and it was unanimously voted to accept the minutes as amended of March 20, 2002.
2. Member Heigham made a motion, Member Hofmann seconded said motion, and it was unanimously voted to accept the minutes of the Executive Session March 20, 2002.

Member Heigham made a motion, and it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:45 PM. Respectfully submitted,

Kristina E. Frizzell
Interim Recording Clerk